

Waldrop named Kentucky School Resource Officer of the Year

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Without Warren East High School Resource Officer Deputy Mike Waldrop, one of last year's graduates wouldn't have received a college scholarship.

Waldrop, whose job is to maintain a safe environment for the students at Warren East, also started the school's first bass fishing club in 2009 that later became a Kentucky High School Athletic Association sanctioned team in 2011 for which he serves as a coach. He also filled in to help coach the school's football team on an interim basis last year and works with students to help them figure out what to do with their lives when they leave school.

Monday, the Kentucky Association of School Resource Officers announced that Waldrop was selected as the Kentucky State School Resource Officer of the year. He will officially be recognized at the Communities and Safe School Conference on June 15 in Louisville.

"He's definitely one of the best high school fishing coaches in Kentucky," said 2014 graduate Austin Moore, who is attending Campbellsville University on a bass fishing scholarship. He was previously on the WEHS Bass Fishing Team. "We didn't have a fishing team at Warren East until he decided to coach it. Without him I wouldn't have gotten the scholarship.

"He was always hanging out in or around the school, talking to kids helping them make the right decisions. I saw him several times each day at Warren East just helping out," Moore said.

Waldrop has been a school resource officer at Warren East since 2010. He is retired from the Western Kentucky University Police Department. Prior to working for WKU, he served in the U.S. Army as a military police officer. Waldrop grew up in Bowling Green where he attended T.C. Cherry Elementary School, Bowling Green Junior High School and graduated in 1987 from Bowling Green High. He has been married for 27 years to his high school sweetheart Thaia Basham Waldrop.

"I am a converted Raider," he said, making reference to the WEHS mascot.

The son of a single mom with strong extended family bonds, Waldrop wants simply to "pay it forward" to help the kids he comes in contact with everyday. His uncle, former longtime Bowling Green Police chief Gary Rayer, talked to him when he got out of the Army about becoming a police officer. He told him that WKU was hiring officers so Waldrop followed in his grandfather, Everett Tabor's footsteps and became a campus officer.

"You see a lot of kids being brought up that way," Waldrop said of growing up in a single-parent home. "I had a lot of opportunities, and I like to pay it forward."

This is not the first time that Waldrop has received peer recognition. He was named the 2011 Deputy of the Year, in part because of his dedication to helping a terminally ill student with basic needs. That same year he was also named the regional School Resource Officer of the Year.

The student, who has since died, was being raised by a single dad who lost his job while caring for the young man as he received cancer treatments. The student, his younger sister and his father lost their home and used borrowed transportation until Waldrop stepped in to get them help. Community support poured in for the family during their darkest days. Waldrop later attended the student's funeral and has maintained a bond with the young man's father.

In February, Waldrop left the school briefly to go to another nearby county facility and noticed a driver in distress on Louisville Road in front of the high school. As he approached the man's vehicle, the man's wife said that her husband was having a heart attack.

Waldrop pulled the man from his vehicle and immediately began CPR. He also called Warren East Middle School's nurse and asked for the nurse to bring the school's automated external defibrillator out to assist with the man's CPR. Waldrop used the AED and performed CPR until an ambulance arrived. The man lived an additional three days.

The man had vomited on himself before Waldrop pulled him from his car exposing the deputy to bodily fluids, which meant that he had to endure the sheriff's office protocol of decontamination and because his exposure, he had to take preventative medicines with strong side effects that made him sick.

"Yeah, I would do it again but I would revert back to my training to use universal precautions," he said.

His boss, Sheriff Jerry "Peanuts" Gaines, talked Waldrop into taking the school resource officer's position because he thought he would be a good fit for the job after having experience working with students just a little older at Western.

"I knew he would be a good one," Gaines said. "After he got into it he loved it. They know him and love him.

"Anything that happens to the kids, he looks after them," he said. "He's a good person."

Waldrop, who was at first hesitant to take the job as a school resource officer, said he loves the work.

"This is the best job I've had in my law enforcement career," he said. "You get to see sometimes an impact you've had as a role model and leader. You get to work with students and parents. You are a resource for the community.

"This is home," he said of Warren East.

Just like in his younger years playing football for BGHS or walking the halls at T.C. Cherry, the people who know Waldrop well call him by his last name. When kids walk past his office they yell out, "Hey Waldrop." He smiles and replies.

"I played football for him," senior Josh Yoebstl said. "He's a great role model. I want to go into law enforcement. He's shown me the road to becoming a cop.

"Me and Waldrop have been close ever since I've been in high school," Yoebstl said.



MIRANDA PEDERSON/DAILY NEWS

Warren East High School Resource Officer Deputy Mike Waldrop, on Tuesday, April 28, 2015, was named as Kentucky Association of School Resource Officers as the Kentucky State School Resource Officer of the year. (Miranda Pederson/photo@bgddailynews.com)

"Waldrop is the type of guy that if you need something, you can go to him and he will help you.

"He always puts us first and finds out what would be best for us before he thinks of himself," he said. "In my eyes, I think Waldrop getting the award, he's one of the best deputies we have in town. He does so much for the community."

Senior Taylor Beals agreed.

"He wants what's best for the students of Warren East," she said.

Warren East principal Nicole Clark said she is excited about Waldrop's recognition.

"He continuously gives 110 percent, and we are lucky to have him as a Raider," Clark said. "Not only is he our school resource officer, but he is a vested member of our school community. He has stepped up and answered the call in other areas as well. He continues to serve as our bass fishing coach and was an assistant football coach for the past two years. I can think of no better person as Kentucky's School Resource Officer of the Year."

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